

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY MADRID
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EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJ: CRAXI'S HOT GSPEL

BEGIN SUMMARY: ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL
DEVELOPMENTS OF THE SUMMER HAS BEEN THE STEADILY
ESCALATING ATTACK BY THE SOCIALISTS ON THE COMMUNIST
PARTY. THE SOCIALIST ASSAULT HAS NOW REACHED A NEW AND
UNPRECEDENTED LEVEL WITH AN ARTICLE BY SOCIALIST PARTY
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SECRETARY CRAXI IN THE CURRENT ISSUE OF ESPRESSO. THE
ARTICLE, A BLUNT DENUNCIATION OF LENINISM, REPRESENTS A
REPLY TO COMMUNIST PARTY SECRETARY BERLINGUER'S RECENT
INTERVIEW IN LA REPUBBLICA WHICH DISCUSSED LENINISM
AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S RELATIONSHIP TO IT. CRAXI'S
RESPONSE IS A CHALLENGE TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND
PRESUMABLY MARKS THE END OF THE LITTLE REMAINING UNITY

OF THE ITALIAN LEFT, END SUMMARY.

1. THE CURRENT ISSUE OF ESPRESSO CARRIES AN ESSAY BY SOCIALIST PARTY CRAXI ENTITLED "THE SOCIALIST GOSPEL." OSTENSIBLY AN ELABORATION OF THE "NEW COURSE" OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY, THE ARTICLE IS IN FACT A REPLY TO COMMUNIST PARTY SECRETARY BERLINGUER'S RECENT INTERVIEW IN AL REPUBBLICA, A REPLY WHICH DENOUNCES LENINISM AND--OBVIOUSLY, THOUGH ONLY BY IMPLICATION--THE PHILOSOPHICAL PREMISES OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY. BOTH AS A STATEMENT OF CRAXI'S CONCEPT OF ITALIAN SOCIALISM AND AS A FRONTAL ASSAULT ON THE COMMUNIST PARTY, THE ARTICLE MAY HAVE EFFECTS ON ITALIAN POLITICS WHICH COULD BE LONG-LASTING AND DEEP.

-- ITS CONTENT

2. THE TEXT OF CRAXI'S ESSAY IS OF LITTLE INHERENT INTEREST AND CAN BE SUMMARIZED BRIEFLY. ACCORDING TO CRAXI'S ANALYSIS THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CONCEPTUAL DICHOTOMY WITHIN SOCIALISM, A DICHOTOMY WHICH BECAME PARTICULARLY ACUTE WITH THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION. THIS DICHOTOMY IS THE ANTITHESIS BETWEEN AUTHORITARIANISM AND LIBERALISM, AN ANTITHESIS WHOSE ROOTS EXTEND TO THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. LENINISM IS A LOGICAL OUTGROWTH OF THE AUTHORITARIAN APPROACH. IT IS A DISTORTION OF

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MARXISM BECAUSE IT SUBORDINATES THE WORKING CLASS TO THE PATERNALISTIC CONTROL OF AN INTELLECTUAL ELITE, THEREBY CREATING A /PSEUDOSOCIALIST DESPOTISM." EVEN AS ELABORATED BY GRAMSCI, THE LENINIST APPROACH IS INCOMPATIBLE "WITH THE SOCIAL PATRIMONY OF WESTER, SECULARIST AND LEIBERAL CIVILIZATION." HENCE, "BETWEEN LENINIST COMMUNISM AND SOCIALISM THERE EXISTS A SUBSTANTIAL INCOMPATIBILITY WHICH CAN BE SYNTHESIZED IN THE CONTRAST BETWEEN COLLECTIVISM AND PLURALISM." AFTER CITING PROUDHON, ROSA LUXEMBOURG, G.D.H. COLE, BERTRAND RUSSELL, DAVID COHN-BENDIT, CARLO ROSSELLI AND DJILAS IN SUPPORT OF HIS ARGUMENT, CRAXI DRIVES HIS POINT HOME: "LENINISM AND PLURALISM ARE ANTITHETICAL; IF ONE PREVAILS, THE OTHER DIES." THEN, IN CONCLUSION, HE REMARKS, "TO THE EXTENT THAT WE WANT TO PROCEED TOWARD SOCIAL PLURALISM, WE HAVE TO MOVE IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION FROM THAT INDICATED BY LENINISM; WE MUST DIFFUSE ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL POWER AS WIDELY AS POSSIBLE."

-- ITS SIGNIFICANCE

3. THE POINT OF THE ESSAY IS NOT ITS ANALYSIS, WHICH
IN ITS SUPERFICIALITY WOULD FAIL TO EARN MORE THAN A
B MINUS IN ANY SOPHOMORE GOVERNMENT COURSE. AFTER ALL,
THE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE EUROPEAN LEFT SINCE 1917 AND
WITHIN ITALIAN SOCIALISM SINCE 1921 HAVE NOT EXACTLY
GONE UNNOTICED. THE SIGNIFICANCE RATHER LIES IN THE
ARTICLE'S TIMING, CONTEXT AND INTENT. CRAXI BELIEVES
HE HAS SEEN IN LENINISM THE ACHILLES HEEL OF THE ITALIAN
COMMUNIST PARTY AND WHEN BERLINGUER'S RECENT INTERVIEW
GAVE HIM AN OPENING, HE POUCHED. THE ARTICLE DOES NOT
DEBATE WHETHER OR HOW MUCH THE COMMUNIST PARTY HAS
CHANGED--INDEED IT DOES NOT ONCE EXPLICITLY MENTION THE
COMMUNIST PARTY OR BERLINGUER. CRAXI MERELY POINTS OUT
THAT LENINISM AND FREEDOM ARE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE AND HE
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HAS IN EFFECT SAID: HOW TELL US, ONCE AND FOR ALL,
MR. BERLINGUER, WHICH ELEMENT OF THIS ANTINOMY DOES
YOUR PARTY ENDORSE?

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4. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE ESSAY AMOUNTS TO THE HARSHTEST ATTACK ON THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN MANY YEARS, PERHAPS THE STIFFEST ATTACK ON THAT PARTY DELIVERED BY A LEADER OF THE ITALIAN SOCIALIST PARTY IN THE WHOLE POSTWAR PERIOD. ALSO UNUSUAL WAS THE INCLUSION OF GRAMSCI IN THE SCOURGE ON LENINISM. GRAMSCI IS VIRTUALLY SACROSANCT IN ITALY AND, AMONG COMMUNISTS, CRAXI'S REMARK MUST THEREFORE STING. INDEED, WITH THIS ESSAY A THRESHOLD HAS BEEN CROSSED; UNTIL THE COMMUNIST PARTY
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UNAMBIGUOUSLY DISASSOCIATES ITSELF FROM LENINISM, THERE CAN NO LONGER BE ANY FURTHER PRETENSE OF A UNIFIED LEFT OR OF AN "ALTERNATIVE OF THE LEFT" TO THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. IN A WORD, CRAXI HAS CAUSED THE MOST THOROUGH BREAK BETWEEN THE COMMUNIST AND SOCIALIST PARTIES IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD.

5. THE SECOND ELEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE IN THE ESSAY LIES IN THE CONTRAST WHICH CRAXI DRAWS BETWEEN LENINISM AND THE SOCIALIST PARTY AS HE ENVISIONS IT. CRAXI'S SOCIALIST PARTY IS DEFINED IN THE ESSAY AS ONE DEDICATED TO THE DISPERSION OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL POWER, A CONCEPT WHICH MARKS A SUBSTANTIAL LURCH BY THE ITALIAN SOCIALIST PARTY AWAY FROM STATE SOCIALISM AND TOWARD THE SOCIALISM OF HELMUT SCHMIDT AND JAMES CALLAGHAN, AWAY FROM KARL MARX AND TOWARD JOHN STUART MILL. ALTHOUGH CRAXI, SUBSEQUENT TO THE APPEARANCE OF HIS ARTICLE, HAS INSISTED THAT HIS "NEW COURSE" IS NO DIFFERENT FROM WHAT THE PARTY CONGRESS APPROVED AT TURIN, CERTAINLY HE HAS PLACED A SUBSTANTIALLY NEW CONSTRUCTION ON PREVIOUS SOCIALIST

TERMINOLOGY.

6. THERE ARE TWO FURTHER ELEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE IN THE ESSAY. WITH HIS ARTICLE, CRAXI HAS FOR THE MOMENT PRONTSTAGED EVERYONE ELSE IN ITALIAN POLITICS. HE HAS MADE HIMSELF NOT ONLY THE MOST OUTSPOKEN OPPONENT OF COMMUNISM BUT ONE OF THE PREPOTENT FIGURES OF ITALIAN POLITICS. MOREOVER, CRAXI'S IDEOLOGICAL THRUST AGAINST COMMUNISM CHALLENGES NOT ONLY BERLINGUER BUT ANDREOTTI AND THE DC. BY COMPARISON TO CRAXI, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS NOW APPEAR COLLABORATOURS WITH POLITICAL WICKEDNESS. FINALLY, CRAXI HAS STATED THE THEME NOT ONLY OF A

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FUTURE ITALIAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN BUT ALSO OF THE IMPENDING EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN JUNE. CRAXI'S ARTICLE IS A PLAY NOT ONLY FOR THE VOTES OF THE LEFT WHO ARE DISSATISFIED WITH THE COMMUNISTS BUT ALSO FOR THOSE OF CATHOLICS WHO ARE DISCONTENT WITH THE CRISTIAN DEMOCRATS.

-- THE REACTION

7. CRAXI'S ARTICLE--BOTH AS AN ATTACK ON THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND AS A NEW CHARACTERIZATION OF ITALIAN SOCIALISM--CONSTITUTES AN ACID TEST OF THE PARTY'S UNITY AND OF CRAXI'S CONTROL OF IT. CRAXI'S WORDS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY DISPLEASING NOT ONLY TO THE SMALL ACHILLI FACTION BUT ALSO TO THE OLD PARTY LEADERS--LEMBARDI, MANCINI AND DE MARTINO. AND, INDEED, DE MARTINO HAS ALREADY LASHED OUT AT CRAXI FOR HIS BETRAYAL OF MARXISM, HIS ANTI-COMMUNIST "POLEMICS" AND HIS PREFERENCE FOR RIGHT-WING CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS RATHER THAN ZACCAGNINI. BUT NONE OTHER THAN THE PARTY'S MOST NOTORIOUS PHILOCOMMUNIST, MANCA, HAS DEFENDED CRAXI. SO ANYTHING LIKE A REVOLT IN THE PARTY SEEMS UNLIKELY.

8. THE REACTION OF THE OTHER PARTIES HAS BEEN MIXED. BOTH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND COMMUNISTS HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY CAUTIOUS. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ARE CLEARLY WORRIED THAT WHAT IS BECOMING A VIRTUAL SOCIALIST CRUSADE AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS MAY UNDERMINE THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. THE AUTHORITATIVE COMMUNIST RESPONSE HAS COME FROM SECRETARIAT MEMBER NAPOLITANO WHO APPEALED FOR THE AVOIDANCE OF IDEOLOGICAL DISPUTES, WHICH WEAKEN NATIONAL UNITY, AND INSTEAD FOR COOPERATION IN SOLVING THE COUNTRY'S URGENT PROBLEMS. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND LIBERALS HAVE RESPONDED WITH THE DEEPT SATISFACTION OF SEEING THE PRODIGAL SON RETURN.

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9. SO FAR THE PRESS HAS BEEN UNABLE TO MAKE UP ITS MIND WHAT TO THINK OF CRAXI'S ARTICLE, WITH THE NOTABLE EXCEPTION OF LA REPUBBLICA. NOTHING IN A LONG TIME HAS MOVED EDITOR SCALFARI, HERETOFORE NO FRIEND OF CRAXI'S TO SUCH RAPTURES OF POLITICAL ENCHANTMENT. IN A FRONT "IS A REAL AND TRUE REFOUNDATION OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY. FROM THIS POINT OF VIEW, THE ESPRESSO ARTICLE MARKS A HISTORICAL DATE IN THE LIFE OF THE ITALIAN SOCIALIST PARTY." CRAXI "HAS NOT SIMPLY PUT MARX ASIDE--HE HAS REJECTED HIM IN TOTO." CONCLUDING, SCALFARI WRITES ELEGIACALLY: "THE SECRETARY OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY ANNULLED ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF THE HISTROY OF THIS PARTY, HAS REVOLUTIONIZED THE TOPOGRAPHY OF ITLAIN POLITICS AND HAS FOUNDED A GREAT LIBERAL-SOCIALIST PARTY. I BELIEVE...THIS IS A FACT OF IMPORTANCE, OF GREAT NOVELTY AND OF IMMENSE PROMISE FOR THE FUTURE."HOLMES

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